

It Wasn't My House . . . But My Mother's

My Mother's House

(Continued From Last Week)

The Courtship

"Oh yes, I shall," he retorted, and continued his way to the house.

The courtship was a formal one, I am told, but speedy, and my mother was married on the twenty-second day of July, the year 1880. The bridal pair set out at once for China, my father forgetting, it has been said, to buy a second ticket until the last minute. It was a significant forgetting. I never heard my mother mention it, and a cousin told me the story. This is not to say that my father was derelict in his duty to his family, when that duty was pointed out to him. It was simply that he lived in the world of books and ideas and philosophy.

As for my mother, she continued, I think, to live in her own house. I think in spirit she never left that gracious white house at the foot of the Allegheny mountains. Underneath the white painted wood, the house, she told me, was of red brick. I imagine that my great-grandfather and my grandfather, being city men of Utrecht, Holland, did not like the idea of living in a wooden house. The inner structure, doubtless, they thought should be of stronger stuff. I know how they felt for when I returned to my own country to live I could not imagine myself living in a house made of wood. It is too frail, or so it seems to me, accustomed as I am to the houses of China, built of brick or stone or in peasant villages in the north of thick adobe walls. My own house is built of Pennsylvania field stone, and it has stood for nearly a century and a half, for the walls are like the walls of a castle. A house of wood? Yes, it can be very beautiful, especially in New England where the towns are made of white houses with green shutters. But a match put to wood makes a fire, does it not? Therefore my own house is of stone, and my mother's house was inwardly of brick. From Utrecht her grandfather and father came with three hundred other souls, a church full of good people and with them their pastor, all in search of religious freedom. For a brief period there was religious strife in Holland, but it lasted so short a time that had they been patient, in six months time it would have been over and they could have stayed in their comfortable houses, enjoying their wealth and culture. Where I would have been had they done so, or would I have been at all, is a puzzlement. Certainly I would not have had a Lincoln-like saint for a father, and I cannot imagine myself as I am, without him.

Shipload of Good People

The shipload of good people, bringing their wealth with them, was woefully and disgracefully cheated upon reaching the land of their choice. I do not know the full story of their arrival, for it remains a painful family memory. I do know that my ancestors bought woodlands in what was then Virginia and into the forest they went, city people who had never seen a mountain in their native land. They had no conception of what it meant to build even a simple log cabin and wily settlers robbed them without mercy. In the end they sold the woodlands and moved to the beautiful plain at the foot of the mountains, and there built the house like a city house. Vague discussions I never fully understood when I was a child and I have not heard since, conveyed to me nevertheless that the valuable early lands were sold at an abnormally low price, and had the family held them, they would have been immensely wealthy today. Be that as it may, they could not live in the forests. They were not forest people. They were city folk, accustomed to theater and music and books and all the rich culture of an ancient European nation, and they starved without it. My mother's house was delivered with memories of European culture, it became a part of her education and nature and later of mine. To me, growing up in China, she imparted the best of the West, while I lived in the greatest and oldest culture of the East, and was thus doubly endowed. For this thanks be to fate.

Throughout all my growing years, then, I was aware that my mother's real life remained in her own house across the sea. Yet she made homes in China that were exquisite in taste. All my memories there are of quiet cool rooms, flowers everywhere, simple delicious meals, and pervasive order. There was no disorder in any home that my mother created. Yet she created every room except the room where my father lived which was called his study. There he allowed no mirrors and no flowers, and the floor was bare. Books cov-

ered the walls, and a vast desk stood in the middle of the room. His typewriter, which he took care of himself, though with difficulty, for he had no mechanical ability, was on a small separate table. Somehow that room had nothing to do with the rest of the house. It was always near the front door and accessible to Chinese guests, grave gentlemen in long gowns, men of tradition, who carried on endless scholarly discussions with my father in lofty Chinese language. Sometimes the guests were my father's helpers at various mission stations who came to collect their salaries or receive directions. Whatever and whoever they were, all seemed remote from our family life, which was in the rest of the house. There we found ourselves, like my mother was of a gay disposition, although she had certain moods which darkened the day for us and which we never understood. Only when I was much older and knew the private story of her life did I guess, and only guess, for she never confided her secret thoughts and feelings to any of us. But when she was what we called "Queen" — that is, when the laughter and the quick grace and the gay talk were stirred — we were troubled.

Reasonable Question

"What is the matter, Mother?" we asked.
"Nothing," she would reply. "Nothing at all! Am I never to be allowed to be quiet?"

We could not answer this reasonable question, and were only quieted in turn. In quiet we played apart, subdued and puzzled until her gay self came back to us. Ah, then were depths in her that none of us ever knew! Whatever the personal shadows, basic to all was her unchanging longing for her home and her country. She was too young when she left that home of hers, and it remained forever in her memory as the home of her childhood, the place where her beloved mother lived and died, and where beauty was. She was friendly to the Chinese as she was friendly to all human beings, but she did not, I dare now to say, love them as my father did (or as I have always loved them and do love them still).

There Were Reasons

There were reasons for this. The Chinese are delightful but careless, whereas my mother was fastidiously neat and clean. I never saw her wearing a soiled or wrinkled garment, and all her personal belongings were dainty and fine and well kept. Our house was comfortable but immaculate, and her Chinese servants had first of all to be clean in every way. Raw foods and salads she prepared herself, because she did not trust Chinese hands, and although she taught her cook to make the lightest cakes that tongue ever tasted, and her hot breads were delectable, she would not let him touch them with his hands. She had been beautifully trained by her French mother, her standards were impeccable and less than the best she would not tolerate.

Speaking of cakes, my mother's fresh coconut cake I have never found elsewhere matched. The coconuts were local, and were bought in their original hairy state from the market by our Chinese cook. Every step was enchanting to me, as a child, in the making of this fabulous cake. The coconut was drained of its milk, nature having provided three tender spots in the hard shell. The drained shell was then cracked and the white meat separated. It came off with a dark skin that had to be sliced off. The pieces of fresh white meat were then washed and grated by hand on an old-fashioned grater, an agonizing task, for unless one were careful one scraped also one's fingers, in which case my mother's sharp eyes always detected pink stains upon the snow white coconut meat. No tinned coconut can possibly equal in flavor the taste of a fresh coconut, and not only a fresh one, but one plucked newly from the palm trees. I was reminded of that fact last year when in India I sat at breakfast on an outdoor terrace and watched barelegged boys climbing the coconut palms, rope in hand, to cut the clusters of nuts and lower them gently to the ground. These were the day's supply for the guests. One bought a nut at the stand and had the milk drained into a glass to drink warm and sweet and then waited for the coconut meat to be cut into squares and pooled.

The years passed. My mother's house became more than the house in which I was born. It became the symbol of security and peace in a world where there was neither security nor peace. I know, from the vantage of these years, that the change did not come suddenly, but it seemed sudden to me, a small child living within the shelter of our Chinese



home, with parents and kindly Chinese friends and devoted Chinese servants. Suddenly, then, it seemed that I was no longer the happy child of favored people. Instead I became a member of something called The White Race, and without knowing it I was one of a group of persons who was attacking China, dividing the country and exploiting the people. All unknown to me, much too small to understand such matters, this sort of thing had been going on for a long time.

It was true that England and European nations had been demanding pieces of Chinese territory and concessions in trade. France had taken an enormous slice of China and called it Indo-China. It is the same territory where now American men are fighting in Vietnam. Germany had taken land and cities, and I could see with my own eyes in the city near which we lived that England had taken land along the Yangtze river, had walled it off, and within the walled area Englishmen and their families lived as though they were in England. On the river itself English ships carried passengers and goods, and there were French, German and Japanese ships as well. But the western nations were the worst for they were the most predatory and they had the weapons.

Near the End of a Dynasty

China was near the end of a dynasty, too. This meant that the imperial family in Peking was near its end after two hundred years of rule. All over China there were restlessness and division. Young men were dreaming of a new imperial house, this time Chinese instead of Manchu, and following the traditional Chinese pattern as a dynasty soared its close, young men of strength and influence were cycling each other as rivals. In Peking the old Empress Dowager, Tzu Hsi, was clinging desperately to the last stronghold of her power. Revolutionists had crept even into the palace and she was too old and tired to try new ways herself. Her only solution for western encroachments was to get rid of the Westerners. The great Tai Ping rebellion she had put down some twenty years before, at the cost of twenty million Chinese lives, and she was right, perhaps, in thinking that the men of the West were her chief enemies now.

She searched desperately for help and found none. Within the palace she trusted no one, for she had found rebels even

the tutors of the young Emperor. They had corrupted him, persuading him that China must modernize from the West. To her this was unthinkable. She determined to rid the nation of westerners. To this end she summoned a fanatical Chinese secret society, called the Boxers, who boasted that they had magic powers which made them immune to foreign bullets. In her desperation she ordered them, and in the year 1900 my world changed with the edict of an imperial edict sent forth by the Empress, in which she ordered the death of every white man, woman and

Chinese home was no longer a shelter and place of safety. Anxiety pervaded the atmosphere and my parents decided whether we should leave for Shanghai and the safety of our own government officials there or stay in China. For our friends, too, were in jeopardy. The imperial edict included all Chinese Christians as well as persons worthy of death.

In the long story of those perilous days I have told in my book *Several Worlds*, and I need not tell it again. The danger of it here is that in my childish mind my home in faraway America became for me the symbol of safety in a dangerous world. It was a confusing time for a small child. My whole life was changed. I was no longer allowed to wander beyond the compound walls. My place in the long pampas grass outside the gate was no longer a place of safety. Snakes I had been warned against, yet the danger was not from snakes but from angry people. For suddenly we were all changed, it seemed. We were not the same American family we had been, living in a friendly neighborhood. Even my father's friends no longer visited the house. Our servants remained faithful but they were afraid, too, of what might happen to them and to their families. We were responsible, it seemed, for what we had done. In some strange fashion we were responsible for the fate of China like a melon," as the old Empress put it, and the exploitation of the Chinese people. When I had this explained to me I could only see the coolies unloading the foreign ships down on the Bund, at the river's edge. It had always troubled me that those men, their slender half-naked bodies sweating under heavy loads, each man carrying a basket in his free hand which he must present to the Chinese official sitting in a comfortable chair under the shade of a tree. The stick must tally with his record, or the official would not be paid for his labor. I had seen many a Chinese official, which the Chinese always lost, and it always seemed to me that I understood the Chinese language as my own and I sympathized with a coolie's agonized explanation. Each never saved him from punishment, for the Chinese could not speak Chinese and depended on an interpreter who said what he thought his master wanted said. I did long to break in with my own childish explanation, and had indeed tried to do so more than once, to the jolly white man only stared me down or turned away. I was responsible for injustice and exploitation? No, it seemed we were.

"I want to go home to your home in America," I begged him. "Not yet."

So I went to Shanghai, however, and stayed there, my father, mother and our Chinese nurse and I, while my mother was alone in our Chinese home. There in Shanghai I lived for nearly a year and there my mother had told me stories of her home and her people who were so different, although I did not know them. I saw the signs of Peking took place. The old city with her walls, and did not come back again. The Boxers had been defeated and the Boxers executed. How stories were made, the Chinese were successful, and after the next summer we went home to our Chinese home. But it was never the same. The walls, never safe. One never knew when the Boxers would break forth in some new explosion.

A harsh peace was made between Western nations and the young Emperor. She yielded with grace to the West. The change had come and though we were not the same, I knew we were not. Our friends came again and the warm personal relationships that we had cherished in the great sea of China. There was no real fear for the Chinese. The Boxers were enough to banish the sense of fear that had been and was from young men and



Pearl Buck's home while she resided in China was considered a palace.

pelled to take my place with those whom I did not know and who did not know me but to whom I belonged by ancestry and birth.

Some day, I was convinced, I would have to leave China and the people I loved and make my home elsewhere. But where? Only my mother's house stood as a haven. It was the one place in the West which belonged to our family. My father's ancestral lands and house had been sold when his parents died, since none of the seven sons wanted to carry on the farm. Six of them were ministers and the seventh was in the state legislature. But my mother's house continued as it had been, occupied, as I have said, by my elder uncle and his family. There was always room for my mother there, and for her children. I knew that her room, where I was born, would be waiting for us whenever we went home. This we did the next year after the Boxer Rebellion ended.

I remember clearly the day of our arrival at my mother's house. The journey had taken a full month, first the travel down the Yangtze river to Shanghai by English steamboat, then the voyage across the Pacific Ocean and finally the train trip across the continent. My uncle met us at the station in a carriage drawn by two horses and we drove in state to the house. I saw it at the far end of the wide green lawn and under the maple trees, for the carriage paused while the gate in the white fence was opened. It was exactly as my mother had said, a white house with vine-covered pillars supporting a portico. It looked what it was, a comfortable, dignified family home, a home in which I had a part because it was my birthplace.

The carriage rolled to the front door, and there we were met by a white-haired gentleman whom I took to be my grandfather, and so hailed him, but he told me he was only my uncle Cornelius, and in a moment there was a still older white-haired gentleman, very straight and stately, and he proved to be my grandfather. We dismounted, and I, separating myself, stopped again and again to look, to drink in the scene, to verify all that had been in my mind and then to realize that it was even more beautiful, more wonderful, than my mother had said. True, there were the inevitable changes inside the house, the different use of rooms that each generation must make in order to settle its claim upon a house, but my mother's room was the same. It is this room that I still remember best. There is something awesome about the room to the spot where one's life began. It seemed to me that I had seen it all before, as indeed I had, and again I saw myself as a newborn child here, where I had first opened my eyes. But by then I remembered it all, and now I set down these memories as I remember them.

Spent the Summer

We spent the summer in my mother's house, arriving

turned for college. I was in the third grade and I do not remember learning anything, my mother having carried me far enough in our Chinese home so that study was unnecessary. I was placed according to my age and not according to what I already knew. None of it seemed important to me then nor does it seem important now. The only memorable event was that the following summer, after a series of visits to aunts and uncles and cousins, we ended with the month of August at my mother's house, a time of pure delight in which I learned to ride horseback, ate quantities of grapes and other fruits, and took part in every activity about the place, from moving the dasher of the churn up and down in the buttery and watching great lumps of butter washed and shaped and put away, to riding in hay wagons. Life was one day of joy after the other, and those weeks did much to wipe away the memories of a changed China, the China to which we had always to return and did return in early September.

Eight years passed before I was to see my mother's house again. I returned to it then, a young girl fresh from a French school in Switzerland, whither I had stayed for a few weeks to improve my French. My skirts were lengthening in the fashion of the day, and my long honey-colored hair was in a thick braid and turned up with a bow at my neck. Again we went straight to my mother's house. My grandfather had died in the years between, and his room had been made into another room. I missed his presence, for he was a man who made himself felt, a quiet positive dignified man who lived apart and yet who influenced the atmosphere of the entire house. The family no longer used the old dining room on the ground floor. It had become part of the storehouse and buttery, and a large new dining room had been added on the floor above. There the family gathered about a long table, my uncle at the head and my aunt at the foot, and on either side my grown cousins, one the son and the other three daughters either finished with their education or finishing. Each was accomplished and, it seemed to me, beautiful and they made me shy — I with my unnecessary store of knowledge of faraway places and lacking essential knowledge of my own country and its people! By now I knew that I was American, however, and that sooner or later the day would come, so far the revolution had proceeded when I would not be able to return to China. It was another twenty years before that day of no return arrived but it did arrive.

I think I felt even in those days, as we sat about the family table, that my uncle had a secret disappointment in his handsome son. I did not know what it was but I felt it there. It pervaded the family somewhat, but not a word was ever spoken, and I gave little thought to analysis, for I was soon absorbed in my own life and my adjustment to college and to young men and women of my generation. Meanwhile life seemed to go on in my mother's house much as it always had, and I supposed always would. More than ever

had to be sold.

I have the story of that from the man who bought it, a neighbor and a friend of the family, whose own handsome house was further up the hill than ours. It was years later that he told me. By then I had not only returned to China, but had married, had given birth to a child, had seen my mother die. I knew from her own lips, too, what it meant to lose the family home. True, she was only a daughter of the house and as I have said it was given always to the eldest son and to his son, but each member of the family was welcome there. I think when she knew that the house no longer belonged to our family that something broke in her heart. She gave up the hope of returning to her own country ever again. There was nothing to which to return now that the center was gone. My uncle's family was dispersed, my cousins scattered and married, the house emptied of its furniture and of the treasures that had been brought from Holland so long ago. What my uncle must have suffered, I can only imagine. My cousin suffered, too, as I know from the lips of the man who bought the house.

"He came here to me in the night," the man told me. "He was distracted and heartbroken, as I could see. I asked him what was the matter and he told me he had been unlucky in business and owed more than he could pay and the house had to be sold. Your family is proud, and he was proud and I could see what it cost him to tell me. But he said he could not bear to see the house sold to strangers and if it had to go, he'd rather it went to a friend. So I told him I would buy it and I did."

Took Children to See the House

This, as I said, I heard years later and when I took my own children to see the house where I was born. It wrenched my heart to see my mother's house as it was instead of as I remembered it. The parlor had of tragic necessity become the bedroom for an invalid wife, making it necessary to push into the background the books and the organ. Sickness pervaded the atmosphere and gave the house an air of transience, and for the time being it was no longer a home as I remembered it. Its soul had fled, and it stood a shell of a house upon its old and solid foundations. I longed to buy it and see it restored again as my mother's house. But it was not for sale.

Once more I returned to it. I am drawn back to it, I know, changed as it is. This time I found the house owner was dead and the house was locked. Every door was locked and the vine was stripped from the portico, leaving it desolate and bare. It was clear that no one lived there. I could not bear to leave it standing alone and empty and I longed to walk again among the rooms, strange as they had become to me, but I could only peer in the windows and see those rooms deserted and grey with dust. For me my

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Rev. A. Sydenstricker, D. D.

Rev. A. Sydenstricker, D. D., for fifty-one years a member of our mission in China, passed away after a few days illness of dysentery at the home of his daughter in Kuling, China, on August 31, 1931. Dr. Sydenstricker was born in Greenbrier comnty, West Virginia, on August 13, 1852. He prepared himself for the ministry and the mission field, attending Washington and Lee University, where he was graduated with high honors, and the Union Theological Seminary, Virginia. He came to China with his bride in 1880, being stationed first in Soochow and later in Hangchow. But he was a man especially fitted for pioneer work, and he was always anxious to go where the Gospel had not yet been preached and no others at work. He opened several of the stations in the North Kiangsu mission and later in his life settled at Chinkiang, from where as a center, he worked over a wide radius of country. He had definite ideals of mission methods, being among the first to advocate education for Christians and an educated ministry. Before a seminary was begun in China he had training classes for ministers, and later was one of the first to help organize the Nanking Theological Seminary where also the last ten years of his life was spent as Deam of the Correspondence School. He believed in self support and the self autonomy of the Chinese Christian Church, and in all his work bore these ideals in mind. He was a man gentle in nature and selfsacrific-

gentle in nature and selfsacrificing to the last fibre of his being. The Chinese people recognized these traits and he was well beloved by them to a degree far beyond the usual. Added to these they respected him for his sound scholarship and his familiarity with their language. One of his outstanding places

the translation of the New Testament into an easy and simple vernacular, pure in style, and easy for the common man to comprehend if he could read. His last work was to make the final revision for a new edition of this work. In a time when many missionaries became discouraged and lost their faith in the times and in the Chinese people, Dr. Sydenstricker, in spite of his years and many hardships and tragic experiences, maintained steadfastly his faith in his mission, which was preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and in the integrity and goodness of the Chinese people. His was a heart of large simplicity. He believed the best of the people among whom he worked, and his belief was rewarded by their love and confidence. He deplored all division in the church and all his efforts were to strengthen cooperation between denominations, between organizations, between Chinese and foreigners. In spite of his soundest and most orthodox faith and creed, he refused to take part in bitter argument and used often to say, "I dislike equally the extreme fundamentalist and the extreme modernist. I am conservative. We must all work together for the glory of God." Such was his spirit and such the man. His life remains to us, who knew him best, a constant victory over fear and doubt and depression. A timid man in many ways, diffident, not loving hazard for its own sake, when confronted with the necessity of enduring danger and hardship he bore not only with fortitude but with grace and a serene spirit, which could be nothing but the fruit of a changeless faith in God's goodness. This faith he preached without ceasing, he practiced his whole life, and in this faith he died tranquilly.

P. F. PRICE.

Nanking, China. 10-5-31

C. J. STULTING DEAD

Cornelius John Stulting was born in Utrecht, Holland, on June 16, 1842, of parents who were staunch members of the Reformed Church of Holland—sometimes properly called the Dutch Reformed Church. When the Government of Holland attempted to supplant the Calvinistic teaching of the church with the liberal views that were then beginning to spread through the influence of the Higher Criticism this family remained loyal to the old faith and were sorely persecuted therefor. At length they decided to migrate to America and so when our subject was five years of age they left their native land for this country and landed in New York in the summer of 1847. After a short sojourn in New York they came to Pocahontas county and settled near Edray but soon after removed to the Little Levels.

Mr. Stulting was educated in the schools of that day—the old academies maintained by private patronage. He was at school in Hillsboro, Frankford, and at Union in Monroe county. He thus laid the foundation of a liberal education, but was hindered from pursuing his studies because of the burden of caring for younger brothers and sisters.

He became a teacher himself and for twenty-five years taught in the public schools of his county. Many are now living who can testify to his worth as a teacher. He had the teacher's gift of inspiring his pupils with his own high ideals. Some of his old pupils recently said that he was the means of planting an ambition in their hearts to make the most of their talents. This is not surprising to those who knew Mr. Stulting. He was a man of strong personality and positive convictions and when he had an opportunity he impressed these on all around him.

He made a profession of religion in early youth and united with the Oak Grove church under the pastorate of the Rev. M. D. Dunlap. The Christian life so early begun continued consistently through about sixty-eight years. In all that time he bore witness to the power of Christ's gospel to save and to keep. The writer has never known a man more loyal to the Bible, to the gospel of the Kingdom, and to the faith of his fathers. He loved the deep things of the spirit and loved to talk of them and was well informed on all the doctrines of Scripture. It is no wonder, then, that a man of such information should also be a man of faith. He believed and trusted Christ and he knew that in Him he had an all-sufficient Savior. He was not afraid of the final hour. He said to the writer in an illness of a year or two ago, "Well, I cannot hope to be here much longer. And why should I wish to remain here. I have as many or more loved ones and friends over there as I have here and if I go I leave these to be with them." And then he spoke of his

good mother and of the impression her Christian character had made on him. Who can tell the far-reaching power of a good mother's training on the generations that come after.

Many years ago Mr. Stulting was elected and ordained an elder in Oak Grove Church and was conscientious and faithful to the discharge of his duties as an official. He felt an especial obligation to attend divine worship and although for several years past owing to the infirmities of age he could hear little of the sermons he was always present when health permitted. Few people seem to realize what encouragement such faithfulness is to a pastor.

Mrs. Stulting had five sisters and one brother. Of these two sisters preceded him to the life to come—Mrs. John Myers and Mrs. Abraham Sydenstricker, for many years a missionary in China. Mrs. Newton Doyle, Mrs. Floyd Doyle, Mrs. John Myers, and Mr. C. L. Stulting survive. There are four children—Mrs. Quincy Callison of Bound Brook, N. J., Mrs. Lemuel Smith, of Charlottesville, Va. Miss Mamie and C. E. Stulting at home with the mother at home survive to feel the loss of a most devoted husband and father.

God has called his servant to his reward and he was ready for the call. During his illness he often expressed his willingness to go whenever the summons should come and we feel sure that the call did not take him unawares. The end came peacefully and painlessly Friday morn., October 13, 1922.

The lessons we may learn from such a life as our brother's are then of industry, frugality, and rigid honesty. He had the stern virtues of the Puritan training received in his father's home. He loved righteousness and hated injustice and could be found on the right side of every moral question that agitated the community. He did not hesitate to declare his position for there was no shrinking from what he believed to be his duty. It has seemed to the writer that the language of the first Psalm applies with special appropriateness to his life and character.

"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the Lord and in his law doth he meditate day and night."

Servant of God, well done.
Rest from thy loved employ
The battle fought, the victory won
Enter thy Master's joy.

The pains of death are past;
Labor and sorrow cease.
And life's long warfare closed at last,
His soul is found at peace.

Soldier of Christ, well done.
Praise be thy new employ;
And while eternal ages run,
Rest in thy Savior's joy.

J. C. J.